

Hello, and thank you for your time and consideration.

My name is Dana Barcellos-Allen. I am writing this testimony in strong support of Proposed Bill 6321, An Act Concerning the Adoption and Implementation of the Connecticut Parentage Act.

My family and I live in Avon. Our household includes my 83-year-old partially disabled father, for whom we caretake, myself, my wife Kerry Barcellos-Allen, and our 2-year-old son Cooper.

Cooper doesn't know that my wife is his biological mother and that I have no actual biological connection to him. He doesn't know that I painstakingly went through hundreds of profiles searching for a donor for him. Cooper doesn't know that I gave my wife hundreds of hormone shots during our two-year infertility journey, where we underwent hope and heartbreak through 5 failed intrauterine insemination attempts and 1 failed in vitro fertilization attempt until, at last, our baby became a perfect reality. He doesn't know that I saw him first, or that I cut his umbilical cord.

He does know, unequivocally, that he is loved by two parents. He calls us both "muh-muh" and he's happiest falling asleep when both of us are within his touching distance. When he wakes from a nightmare, biology isn't on his mind. When he falls, he's not thinking of biology. He simply wants his parents. He knows that our unit, the parents that love him, make up his family.

My wife and I are legally married – we married in California prior to moving to Connecticut, and we would have been recognized under Connecticut's state law but federal recognition had already happened by the time we moved here in 2016. Having that marriage recognition might seem, to many, sufficient enough for my parental rights to Cooper, as the legal spouse of his biological parent. However, federal or state recognition of my marriage is not guaranteed – it is subject to legislative and judicial actions which are influenced by political opinions and administrations. As we saw in California in 2008, same-sex couples who were legally married by the state had their marriages invalidated by voters who passed Proposition 8 which became state law.

I am also listed as parent on Cooper's birth certificate, and again, this might seem like sufficient protection of my rights as a parent. However, we are seeing numerous court

cases in many states where workers are claiming “religious freedom” so as not to provide services to same-sex couples because they disagree on a religious level. My greatest fear is that, were my wife incapacitated in an accident and not available as biological parent to make decisions on our son’s behalf, that someone would claim “religious freedom” and not recognize my parentage, therefore cutting me out of the decision-making process for my son. The Connecticut Parentage Act would give me further protection in a case like that.

Prior to having Cooper, my wife and I researched all the things that we could do to strengthen my rights as a non-biological parent. One CT law firm told us they could create a package for us for \$6,000 that included second-parent adoption paperwork, pre- and post-birth certificates, etc. But because our savings had been depleted by the high cost of multiple batches of donor sperm (not covered by insurance) and expensive infertility treatment (which is inconsistently covered or not covered depending on different insurance companies without much rhyme or reason), we could not afford that legal fee. We did the research and work ourselves, devoting much time into securing my role as best we could. Connecticut does allow second-parent adoption that includes same-sex couples, but the process involves time researching and away from work and court fees. (In some cases, second-parent adoption in Connecticut requires in-home visits which incur additional fees and scrutiny).

What the Connecticut Parentage Act will do is even the playing field for families who fall outside the traditional biologically connected model. Children like our Cooper deserve parents who have every right available to them, without adding additional costs that biological families do not have to incur, without the stress of jumping through additional hoops that biological families do not have to do.

Isn't it lucky for children that there are so many types of families connected by love who want to be a legitimate and protected parent? For Cooper and for all the other children who love and are loved by non-biological parents, I ask that you allow all families to have the same legal recognition to parentage by supporting the Connecticut Parentage Act.

Thank you.

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